



February 23, 2023

Written testimony of Angela Perry, LNHA, Administrator, Parkville Care Center Concerning the Governor's Recommended SFY 2023 Budget Revisions for Connecticut Nursing Homes

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker and to the members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Angela Perry, Administrator at Parkville Care Center in Hartford, Connecticut. I am proud to be a representative of a community nursing home that has served the Parkville neighborhood for 53 years. We are licensed for 150 beds with a current workforce of 130, and we are members of the Connecticut Association of Health Care Facilities (CAHCF).

A Period of Trauma *and* Resilience for our Nursing Home Residents and Caregivers

We are now approaching two years into an unprecedented period of history battling the COVID-19 pandemic and public health emergency. I can personally attest that our residents we serve within our community, and our employees, continue to be challenged like no other time in our history of providing clinical and medical services in Connecticut. I can *also* say that our nursing home is hopeful and determined to move forward and beyond this pandemic with a stronger sense of resilience embedded into our everyday culture.

Our residents and staff have endured nearly every aspect of the pandemic when we were initially mandated to close our doors to visitors in March 2020 which lead to an overwhelming sense of uncertainty and eventually resulting in pandemic fatigue. Most recently, our experience battling another wave due to the most recent Omicron outbreak at Parkville forced us to reimagine our environment from the initial peak of the pandemic. For nearly a year, we saw first-hand the consequences of a lack of COVID-19 testing capacity, the egregious shortages of PPE, and the relentless changes of regulatory guidance and policies that eventually evolved as we learned more about the virus and spread. We experienced the severe and emotionally traumatic visitor restrictions imposed early in the pandemic that separated residents from their families and friends, and we have experienced the optimism of what the COVID-19 vaccine, and most recently the booster, means to our community. While the trauma our residents and caretakers faced was unpredictable, I can say that their resilience and determination continues to be extraordinary.

Severe Staffing Shortages is Hindering Admissions, Increasing Labor Costs and Slowing the Nursing Home Recovery Plan

The severe staffing shortages our nursing home has been inflicted with continues to be the most challenging in my tenure as an administrator in already compromised industry compared to pre-pandemic times. For example, there has been studies identified in national articles that reported certified nursing assistants and licensed nursing staff turnover rates over 90% despite our ongoing efforts to retain staff and enhance our retention programs. Not to mention, the price gouging from staffing agencies that placed an additional financial burden to an already starved environment. At times, the staffing challenges consequently impacted admissions from hospitals and our ability to provide continuity of care to those who seek our services who reside within the Parkville community. Furthermore, the staffing challenges has resulted in a 26- bed unit to be unoccupied throughout the pandemic which again has impacted our ability to serve the community that we have so much pride in caring for.

Nursing Staffing Pools and Negative Impact on Care and Increased Costs

Parkville Care Center has been very negatively impacted by the staffing shortages in various ways resulting in contracting with nursing staffing agencies who are unfamiliar with the specific person centered care needs of our residents. Using staffing agencies has a direct negative correlation that has altered our consistent staff assignments and comfortability for our residents who are familiar with our holistic practices. The financial consequences have also been tremendous and has also lend a hand to further compromising the available resources to better care for our residents. Although, I am pleased to learn the Connecticut Attorney General is reviewing these pricing practices of staffing agencies and I am hopeful Connecticut will pass legislation that caps.

More recently we are now concerned about the COVID-19 staff booster mandate now extended to March 7, 2022 and how the staffing situation will be worsened if we have staff furloughs as a result of non-compliance. Although we achieved 100% compliance with the initial staff vaccine mandate, unfortunately we are having a much more challenging time with the booster due to the perceived uncertainty of protection against the virus due to the recent spike in breakthrough cases resulting from Omicron.

The Connecticut General Assembly has provided a Lifeline of Nursing Home Support, But the Staffing Issues Remain Unaddressed

To close, I must share my gratitude to the state legislature for the tremendous support we have received that has provided additional support for our employees and stability during this period. Parkville Care Center implemented the 4.5% employee wage enhancements that was made available last session and appreciated by our caretakers. Looking ahead, additional employee wages and benefits will further aid in rebuilding our workforce and providing some relief to the financial burdens imposed as a result of the pandemic.

Thank you. I am always able and willing to answer any questions you may have.

Angela Perry, LNHA
Administrator
Parkville Care Center